

[10191/1775]

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listing, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-14 (canceled).

Claim 15. (currently amended) A method for determining a future travel-path area of a first vehicle, the first vehicle equipped with a distance sensor, comprising the steps of:

determining a relative position of at least one second vehicle traveling ahead of the first vehicle, the first vehicle determining the relative position of the at least one second vehicle at predetermined timepoints using the distance sensor;

storing the determined relative position of the at least one second vehicle in a storage device, the determined relative position constituting a course path of the at least one second vehicle traveling ahead;

determining the future travel-path area of the first vehicle at least as a function of the course path of the at least one second vehicle traveling ahead; and

~~projecting~~ extrapolating the course path of the at least one second vehicle traveling ahead in direction of a position of the first vehicle.

Claim 16. (currently amended) The method according to claim 15, wherein the step of ~~projecting~~ extrapolating the course path of the at least one second vehicle includes ~~projecting~~ extrapolating the course path of the at least one second vehicle to a position in which the first vehicle is located occurs up to the position of the first vehicle.

Claim 17. (currently amended) The method according to claim 15, further comprising the step of:

determining at least one of a transverse offset and a curvature between the ~~projected~~ extrapolated course path of the at least one second vehicle traveling ahead and a current course path of the first vehicle.

Claim 18. (currently amended) The method according to claim 17, further comprising the step of:

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determining the future travel-path area of the first vehicle using at least one of a transverse offset and a curvature of the current course path of the first vehicle in relation to the ~~projected~~ extrapolated course path of the at least one second vehicle traveling ahead.

Claim 19. (currently amended) The method according to claim 18, wherein the determining of the future travel-path area is based on a plurality of projected course paths of the at least one second vehicle traveling ahead, and further comprising:

filtering out a lane change of one of the at least one second vehicle traveling ahead using one of a comparison, a correlation, and an average of the plurality of ~~projected~~ extrapolated course paths of all of the at least one second vehicle traveling ahead.

Claim 20. (previously presented) The method according to claim 15, further comprising:

comparing the course path of the at least one second vehicle traveling ahead stored with at least one coordinate of the current course path of the first vehicle at at least one of selected timepoints and freely selectable timepoints.

Claim 21. (currently amended) The method according to claim 15, wherein the step of ~~projecting~~ extrapolating the course path of the at least one second vehicle traveling ahead is accomplished using at least one of statistical analyses and mathematical interpolation procedures on the determined relative position stored.

Claim 22. (currently amended) The method according to claim 15, further comprising:

evaluating the ~~projected~~ extrapolated course path of the at least one second vehicle traveling ahead using at least one performance criterion, wherein the at least one performance criterion contains a statistical component, a nonpredictable component and a predictable component.

Claim 23. (currently amended) The method according to claim 22, further comprising:

when the at least one performance criterion of the ~~projected~~ extrapolated course path of the at least one second vehicle traveling ahead is less than a predetermined threshold performance value, then at least one of: (i) deleting the ~~projected~~ extrapolated course path of the at least one second vehicle traveling ahead from the storage device and (ii) not considering the ~~projected~~ extrapolated course path of the at least one second vehicle traveling ahead in the determining of the future travel-path area of the first vehicle.

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Claim 24. (previously presented) The method according to claim 15, wherein the storage device is configured as a ring storage device.

Claim 25. (previously presented) The method according to claim 15, further comprising:
when the storage device is full, determining whether to delete at least one of the course path stored and any new course paths, in accordance with a performance criterion based on at least one predictable component.

Claim 26. (previously presented) The method according to claim 15, further comprising:
limiting the future travel-path area based on at least one of a position of detected stationary objects and a position of detected oncoming vehicles.

Claim 27. (previously presented) The method according to claim 15, further comprising:
determining at least one further future travel-path area of the first vehicle based on at least one of a steering angle, a steering wheel angle, a yaw rate, a difference of wheel speed, a transverse acceleration of the first vehicle, a stationary object detected by the distance sensor of the first vehicle, and an oncoming vehicle detected by the distance sensor of the first vehicle; and

determining a verified future travel-path area based on the future travel-path area and the at least one further future travel-path area.

Claim 28. (currently amended) A device for determining a future travel-path area of a first vehicle, the first vehicle having a current course path, comprising:

a distance sensor associated with the first vehicle to determine at predetermined time points at least a relative position of at least one vehicle traveling ahead in relation to the first vehicle;

at least one storage device configured to store the relative position determined;

an arrangement configured to determine a travel-path of the at least one vehicle traveling ahead from the at least the relative position stored in the storage device;

an arrangement configured to determine the future travel-path area of the first vehicle at least based on the travel-path of the at least one vehicle traveling ahead; and

an arrangement configured to project extrapolate the travel-path of the at least one vehicle traveling ahead in direction of the current course path of the first vehicle.

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Claim 29. (currently amended) The method according to claim 15, wherein the ~~projected~~ extrapolated course path of the at least one second vehicle is substantially parallel to a current path of the first vehicle.

Claim 30. (currently amended) The method according to claim 15, wherein a current path of the first vehicle is within a first lane of a road and the ~~projected~~ extrapolated course path of the at least one second vehicle is contained in a second lane of the road.